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#### FRANK MORTIMER.

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#### MY FIRST YEAR OF HOUSEKEEPING.

BY MRS. H. C. GARDINER.

IT is no fiction that I sit down to my desk to chronicle this evening. As I look back through the long vista of years, and review the early days of my married life, its perplexities and cares come up before me in far more vivid colors than its joys; though the retrospect often provokes a laugh where the real experience caused bitter tears.

I was just twenty years old when I became the wife of a clergyman, a poor country pastor. It was a love-match, and with the thriftlessness of lovers, I think it did not then occur to us that we could not live upon love, or that it would need such vulgar appliances as roast beef and palatable puddings to preserve, in its purity, the divine essence of the grand passion.

Everybody said that I was totally unfit for a minister's wife. I was, naturally, exceedingly joyous and mirthful, and without a particle of the staid dignity expected from persons in my position; while my husband was a grave, thoughtful man, endowed, by nature, with a commanding appearance and prepossessing manners. I do not wonder now that people could not see the propriety of his choosing me for his wife, when so many pattern women stood ready to accept him. My own family had but one objection to the match; he was poor and I had no idea of practical housekeeping.

Ah! how well I remember the first washing day! My husband, after vainly trying to persuade me to employ a wash-woman (I knew he could not afford it,) came into the back kitchen to help me himself. We were very merry at first; but after rubbing off little patches of skin from every knuckle, and burning our arms till they looked like illustrated maps of some unknown country, we began to find out that there was little poetry, and no fun, in the wash tub.

But the ironing day was worse yet .-Nothing but pride kept me from rolling those starched shirts into a bundle and taking them across the fields to my mother's kitchen. I forgot to mention that we bad taken up our abode in a parish but one mile

distant from my father's house. I had never ironed any starched clothes of any description; but from my brothers at home I had imbibed very exalted ideas in regard to the importance of immaculate shirt bosoms. My husband told me all that he could remember of his mother's method and then betook himself to his study. Shall I ever forget my feelings when the flat-iron -heated seven times hotter than its wont, and carefully applied to the glutinous surface, suddenly struck up an attachment for the same, and, when forcibly separated, left its whole image and superscription behind : "The coffee will be spoiled. Take off your

in black and brown colors. I have that bonnet, Hattie, while I got another cup shirt now. I keep it to show to those wise and plate, and we will chat afterward." mothers who are training their daughters for future uselessness.

But it was in cooking that I found my chief trouble. All my attempts in that line, at the time I commenced housekeeping, had resulted in spoiling several kinds of rich cake concocted in accordance with those recipes which fill our modern cookery books. I had never made a loaf of bread in my life. Baker's bread served us for a time-for so long a time, indeed, that we they are done." found out all its good qualities, and have not tested its excellencies for many years.

We had been married and settled nearly a fortnight, when, one morning my husband came in with a letter in his hand, and a very anxious expression on his face. I sprang up from my seat nearly upsetting the breakfast table, which was waiting for

"What is the matter, Frank? Is anybody sick-or dead? Have you got bad news?"

"No. At least, it ought not to be bad news."

"Well, what is it? Something serious-I know by your looks."

" No, Hattle; nothing of the kind. Only I feared it might annoy you. It is only a note from one of my college chums, Fred Knowles, saying that he is going to Boston, and will call on us, and-get his dinner today," said my husband, finishing the sentence reluctantly.

It was my first call to entertain company, and, knowing, by this time, my ignorance, I shrank back affrighted from the prospect. I confess too, a feeling of deep mortification that my husband could not receive his most intimate friends without so serious a drawback upon his pleasure. All my natural energy and pride was aroused, and I determined to become a good practical housekeeper at whatever cost of time or labor .-But the present emergency was first to be attended to.

"I suppose I had better get some fresh loaves from the bakery?" Frank looked at the dry, light slices on the breakfast table as he spoke.

"Yes, I think so. And some meat, Hattie. The forlorn old roast has lasted a fortnight, I am sure. I think I should recognize its bones if I saw them in Africa. Do you think you could broil a steak, Hattie?"

"Yes. But Frank you must come out of the parlor and overlook me. And if you will get some peas, and lettuce, and other vegetables, I shall get up a famous din-

A half-smile flitted across his face. He had heard of my famous dinners before."

"Well, we must do our best. The cars will not arrive till two o'clock, so there will be plenty of time both for marketing and trifle better success in making some milk cooking.'b

"Is Mr. Knowles very particular?" I asked, timidly. "Will he notice if things go just a little wrong?"

"Perhaps not. But he will have a natural curiosity in regard to the capabilities of his friend's wife. But I think we shall do

very well." "I am sure we shall," was my encouraging response, inspired by a bright idea that suddenly occurred to me. In accordance with it, my husband had no sooner started for the market, than I, slipping on my hat and shawl, started on a long walk through the fields and woods. I was going to consult my mother about the dinner. I surprised her by bursting into the diningroom, quite out of breath from my hurried walk, just as the family were sitting down to a late breakfast.

"Is it Hattie or her ghost?" asked my father, getting up to welcome me. "If my memory serves me our Hattie used to

"Housekeeping improves me, papa."

"Don't wait to talk," said mamma.

"No, thank you. I cannot stop a minute." Mamma opened her eyes in astonishment. "You are not going to walk directly back

again? Let me take your shawl." "But I must go. We are going to have company to dinner. Frank's chum. And I want to know how long to boil potatoes and other-"

Such a chorus of laughter as interrupted me. "Why, my dear child, boil them till

"I know as much as that, mamma; but when must I begin them to have them done at the right time? I have got peas to cook and beef-steak, and I ought to make a pudding. Oh, dear!"

They all laughed again, as much at my distressed looks as at my ignorance. 1 did not join them; indeed, it was as much as I could do to keep back my tears.

"It is not Hattie's fault that she knows so little about cooking," at last said my father, kindly: "You must not mind our mince-pie that I eat at your table last Sunmother. And now as it regards the present difficulty," he went on pleasantly, "I have a plan to propose. I will put the harness on old Fanny, and you, mother, can take the poor child home and stay to superintend this dinner."

Mamma always assents to papa's plans; so my load of responsibility was gone at once. It was pleasant to see the look of relief on my husband's face as we drove up to the door. "I have been searching everywhere for you," he said, "and I could almost find it in my heart to scold you for causing me so much anxiety; but your safe return satisfies me. Especially as your excursion has brought your mother to aid us in our extremity. But, Hattie, I must insist on your having no more private walks."

"Ah, sir! If you had known, you would have forbidden it. That would have spoiled

I have no doubt that Mr. Knowles left us But I felt like a hypocrite for weeks after-

It came to pass, after many days, that bakers' bread became unendurable. I tried to believe in it, I praised and tasted it; but it would not do. Its glory had departed. I began heartily to approve of Pharaoh's course in lifting the head of the chief baker from off his shoulders and hanging him upon a tree; but I saw no way out of my trouble. I had tried many times to raise bread, but had not succeeded in making any fit to appear on the table. I had a biscuit, though I could never guess right in regard to the amount of soda required .-Sometimes they were yellow enough to be mistaken for nuggets of virgin gold; but oftener they had the appearance of having been hardened and compacted in a cheesepress. My husband pretended that they were passed through heavy rollers, like those used in foundries. At first I tried to work the cold biscuit into puddings and griddle cakes, but their peculiar solidity frustrated all such attempts to economize. But when the case appeared perfectly hopeless I had still one resource. There was a wide ditch behind the garden, and in its dark waters I buried my biscuit out of my sight. Inexperienced girls should never commence housekeeping without a convenient ditch at hand. But my troubles did not end here. In an evil hour, a neighbor's hen hatched a big brood of ducklings, which, in due time, found their way to my out. cache of provisions. The biscuit, so long in soak, now had a resurrection, and I remember watching the poor fowls as they vainly attempted to divide them with their strong bills.

"My dear Hattie," said my husband, one I said. "I am sure there is yeast enough locks by introducing powder into them.

to make raised bread?"

"I cannot tell, I am quite discouraged." "You have learned to cook so many things in so short a time," he went on encouragingly, "that I am sure if you had best method, you would succeed admirably. Why do you not consult your mother? She is a superior cook."

when my mother, and sister, and aunts, and, in fact, all our friends united in predicting our present perplexities. No, it would be too mortifying to go home for for counsel in this matter. Indeed, I am ashamed to expose my ignorance by consulting any one. I give all my visitors ba- credit to any whipped youngester of ten. I ker's bread, and they, having it occasionally, seem to like it."

"Suppose we try boarding Hattie?"

want a home by ourselves. You would not had left it. be contented to give up our home liberties laughing at you my dear. I have been and privileges, Frank. If it were not for longing to ask what you put into that the eternal bread question, we could get a down by me, and drew my head from the little enjoyment out of life; but comfort is hard table, upon which it had rested, to his day? I have tasted it ever since. But I now out of the question. I wish Frank," will not tease you, for I have no doubt that I added, pettishly, "that you had married ingly he talked to me! He seemed to have you will in time, be as good a cook as your | a housekeeper, and I had gone into a con-

His face flushed. "I was not finding fault, Hattie. I am as ignorant as yourself, and I am sure I could not get along with the countless details of kitchen work half the attempt to obtain instruction, and the as skillfully and cheerfully as you do. I think you will conquer this difficulty in time.

"In time, if ever," I responded, ungraiously, "I hopethere will be no breadmaking in eternity !"

He looked at me in surprise for a mopainfully; but he saw I was in too reckless a mood to be reasoned with.

After he had gone to his study, I sat down to think. I felt wicked and unhappy. | direction." I knew I had spoken unkindly and ungenerously to my husband, whose unwearied that day, under the impression that my so often excited my gratitude. Alas, that fixing a few loaves under her direction. husband had secured a matrimonial prize. so much misery could result from the want. You will easily get the art in this way, and of a loaf of good bread!

A sudden resolve inspired me. Without waiting to clear away the breakfast things. I went into a kind old lady in the neighborhood, and after confessing my ignorance, begged to be initiated into the mysteries of bread making.

"There is no trouble," said the old lady, "if you have good yeast." "But I have tried yeast, and my bread

soured." "You let it stand too long. It must be out in the pans as soon as it is light, and

then stand till it begins to come up again." "But where can I get good yeast?" "At the bakery. I get mine there. You can't help having good bread if the yeast is right. Only be sure to bake it soon

enough." I was soon on my way to the bakery, a mile distant. The fresh air and pleasant sunlight soon had their usual genial influence upon me, and I began to get back my lost courage and cheerfulness.

"After all," I said to myself, "I must succeed if I persevere. I am not naturally dull, and I will learn to make good bread if it takes me a year.

I procured a pint of yeast and hastened home. I determined that the "hoisting" element should not be lacking in quantity; so I put into the flour all the yeast I had bought, only adding a cup of milk to moisten it sufficiently. It smelt very strongly of hops, but I thought that would bake

I had scarcely placed it in a warm corner by the stove to rise, when I recollected Mrs. | put a pane in yer head without any putty." Lee's caution about baking it in time to prevent its souring.

"I must run no risk of that, at all events,"

morning, after the usual toil of breakfast in it to raise it if I bake it directly. It can was over, "don't you think you could learn rise in the oven, to be sure. Dear me! how green it looks! But it will all come right in baking, I dare say."

So, without further delay, I placed it in the oven. I would not, if I could, describe its appearance when it came out. I did some one to give you a few hints about the not wait to test its quality, but threw it, almost hissing hot, into that long suffering ditch. I am afraid it is there now. It is many years since I left the place, but I "You forget, Frank, how we resented it often fancy half a dozen ducks hard at work upon it.

I went back to the house, and, for the first time sat down to have a hearty crying spell. It was no genteel sniffle, with just tears enough to add lustre to my eyes; but a downright sobbing that would have done was utterly discouraged. In this condition my husband found me when he came down to dinner. There was no dinner cooked "We cannot afford that; and, besides, we and the breakfast-table stood just as we

At first he looked much alarmed, at the state of affairs. Then he came and sat shoulder. How soothingly and encouragquite forgotten my provoking language to himself, and to be only anxious to com-

After a time I told him the sad experience of the morning, the long, fatiguing walk, bepeless result. It was anything but a funny story to me, but I felt him trembling as I proceeded; and when I concluded with this amiable wish, that those ducks might be choked to death if they ever brought that bread up to the light of day he broke out into a fit of laughter such as ment, but he did not reply. The marked I had never seen him indulge in. It was irreverence of my language effected him a long time before he was sober enough to

> "I think, Hattie," he said, at last, "that you have at least taken one step in the right

"How?"

"Why, after confiding in old Mrs. Lee, forbearance and gentleness, amid the incon- it will not now be difficult to tell her of veniences caused by my incompetency, had your failure, and to ask for the privilege of she is too kind to care for the trouble."

> "To be sure Frank. I wonder I did not think of that. I shall try very hard, and you will have a housekeeper yet."

"And you will not sigh for a convent, Hattie?"

"Ah, Frank! it is fortunate that I have a considerate husband. Every body would not forgive such a temper as I exhibited this morning."

We extemporized a lunch to serve for a dinner; and then I again set off to visit Mrs. Lee. At last I learned to make bread.

I could fill many pages with such doleful reminiscences, and should be willing to do so, if I could convince one young girl the importance of practical housekeeping knowledge; or make her understand how much of the grace and comfort of a home depends upon the domestic habits of its mis-

But I will only indulge my vanity by stating, what is really true, that I can now cook a dinner, clear-starch and iron, preserve and pickle, knit stockings and darn them, all in unexceptionable style. If any one doubts it, let him or her come and pass a week at the pretty parsonage in the rural village of Lanswood.

13"An Irish glazier was putting a pane of glass into a window, when a groom who was standing by, began joking with him, telling him to mind and put in plenty of putty. The Irishman bore the banter for some time, but at last silenced his tormentor by-"Arrah, now be off wid ye, or else I'll

Modern belles are said to be like burglars, because they destroy the finest